

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Proposed Regulations for Amendment 8 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hardbottom Habitats of the South Atlantic Region (Coral Amendment 8).**

**June 2014**

#### **What would Coral Amendment 8 do?**

- If approved, Coral Amendment 8 would extend protections for deepwater coral ecosystems by expanding the boundaries of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern and the Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.
- Coral Amendment 8 also proposes a transit provision through Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern for fishing vessels with rock shrimp onboard.

#### **Why is Coral Amendment 8 necessary?**

- Recent scientific explorations have identified areas of hard bottom habitat including deep water coral outside the boundaries of the existing Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern and Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.
- The proposed expansion would extend current gear prohibitions to these newly identified areas to enhance protection for deepwater coral.
- The proposed modifications to the transit provisions would allow rock shrimp fishermen to access additional rock shrimp fishing grounds in less time using less fuel than if the fishermen were required to travel around the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern.

#### **What gear is prohibited in the habitat areas of particular concern?**

- In the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, the use of bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot or trap is prohibited. If aboard a fishing vessel; anchor, use of anchor and chain, and grapple and chain is prohibited.
- In addition to the gear listed above, mid-water trawl is also prohibited in Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.

#### **What are the proposed transit provisions through Oculina Bank?**

- To be exempted from the prohibition on possessing rock shrimp in the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, a vessel must have a valid commercial permit for rock shrimp.
- Vessels in the area with rock shrimp onboard, would be required to maintain a direct and non-stop continuous course through the area at a minimum speed of 5 knots. The speed would be determined by a vessel monitoring system approved for the South Atlantic rock shrimp fishery. The vessel monitoring system would be required to ping (signal) at a rate of 1 ping per 5 minutes.

- Vessels with rock shrimp onboard in Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern would be required to be stow gear appropriately with doors and nets out of water and either onboard the deck or below the deck of the vessel.

#### **How do I submit a comment on the amendment and proposed rule?**

- You may submit comments by either of the following methods. Comments received through other means may not be considered.
- Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)
  - Enter the following docket number into the “Search” box: NOAA-NMFS-2014-0065.
  - Select the appropriate title, and click “Submit a Comment.” This will display the comment Web Form.
  - Attachments to electronic comments (up to 10 MB) will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.
- Mail:
 

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Sustainable Fisheries Division  
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- The public may comment on the actions in Coral Amendment 8 from May 22, 2014, until July 21, 2014.
- The public may comment on the proposed regulations to implement Coral Amendment 8 from June 3, 2014 until July 3, 2014.

#### **Where can I find more information about the amendment?**

- Contact NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office
  - By Mail:
 

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263 13th Avenue South  
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  - By FAX: (727) 824-5308
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Coral Amendment 8 is available on line at: NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Web site: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/s\\_atl/coral/2014/am8/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/coral/2014/am8/index.html) or, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Web site: <http://www.safmc.net/> .